



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of May 8, 2019
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Room 303



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Crosby called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: Amanda Crosby, Jill Joyce, Erik Torch, Tjaard Breeuwer, Dennis Isernhagen, Britt Rohrbaugh, Dudley Edmondson, David Demmer.

Not present: David Kirby (ISD 709 School Board Liaison), Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison), Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Kristin Bergerson, Jenny Peterson.

III. Approval of March 13th and April 17th Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Torch motioned for approval of the March 13th and April 17th meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Joyce. Unanimously approved.

IV. Presentations

A. Poop Fairy Campaign – Cheryl Skafte, Volunteer Coordinator

Crosby invited Cheryl Skafte to the floor. Indicated that the City worked with UMD on abandoned and dog waste issues. Reflected on the new Poop Fairy sign that was posted on social media, indicating it received a positive response. Stated the new signs will be posted through-out our parks. Mentioned the UMD students performed an informal survey, where many indicated they were unaware that dog waste can be harmful for the environment.

Rohrbaugh questioned if baggies and garbage cans would be placed next to the signs. Skafte indicated we are at capacity for the amount of dog waste containers and mutt mitts to be properly tended for. Breeuwer questioned the definition of “at capacity.” Skafte indicated Park Maintenance services 100 garbage cans – which is the maximum. David Demmer questioned if our dog parks are known for ecoli and disease borne illnesses. Lisa Luokkala indicated we will be having a study performed this summer with information provided this fall.

B. Waterfront and Beach Safety – Cheryl Podtburg, YMCA Aquatic Safety Coordinator and Jesse Schomberg, MN Sea Grant

Jesse Shomberg reflected on the high use Park Point receives. Stated there is a new rip current display at the Maritime Museum. Provided information on the Twin Ports Rip Current Workgroup. Reflected on the survey results regarding rip currents and displayed on the screen.

Cheryl Podtburg reflected on the different levels of lifeguard certifications. Shared the YMCA



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provides lifeguards at Park Point. Mentioned the desire to find resources for training as well as increasing the lifeguard wage. Reflected on the options to extend the hours to have lifeguards on duty and implementing the Beach Safety Team on dangerous days.

Joyce questioned what is being done collaboratively with other agencies. Podtberg shared there is combined support for the Water Safety Expo and the current work with the Minnesota Sea Grant to further gain knowledge on rip currents.

Joyce questioned what is being done for land rescue and water rescue. Schomberg indicated their focus is education. Schomberg mentioned predicating Lake Superior rip currents is challenging because it is different from an ocean, where an ocean has waves 10 seconds, Lake Superior has a wave every 3-5 seconds. Joyce requested the rescue data. Podtberg indicated she will get this information to Joyce. Isernhagen questioned where the funding is provided from to operate the lifeguard program. Podtberg indicated the funding comes from Beach House revenues. Demmer questioned what the current cost is to operate the Beach House and if you can you see a flag pole from the beach house. Podtberg shared you cannot see the flag poles from the Beach House. Schomberg shared the Fire Department is responsible for changing the flags. Schomberg highlighted a volunteer group patrols the 12th Street Lot to share the conditions of the lake and when it is dangerous to swim.

V. Commissioner Committees

- A. Administrative (E-board) – meeting date: Thursday, March 28th at noon at the Parks Office
Chair – Amanda Crosby, Jill Joyce, Tjaard Breeuwer [Alicia Watts, Lisa Luokkala, Jim Filby Williams]

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Joyce questioned if the piles of buckthorn will be removed from Lincoln Park. Jessica Peterson indicated a follow-up with Park Maintenance will occur.

VII. New Business

VIII. Old Business

Luokkala mentioned the goal is to seek approval vacation of Lincoln Park Drive. Indicated this is not a City platted roadway. Edmondson questioned the urgency of the vote. Luokkala indicated we are at 90% of design and moving forward with a 2019 construction to start this year. Edmondson questioned the width of the path. Luokkala shared this is an 8 foot pathway for bikes and pedestrians. Demmer questioned the involvement with stream experts with this project. Luokkala highlighted the 2017 FEMA restoration on Miller Creek has the same construction manager for the Lincoln Park project. Luokkala mentioned there will not be removal or additional footprint to the waters edge. Demmer questioned if there have been conversations on resiliency. Luokkala stated Parks and



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Recreation is working closely to develop a rain garden and bioswale features where there is often erosion. Luokkala shared Stormwater Engineers from the City of Duluth have been involved with this project. Breuwuer questioned what is the max percent grade of an ADA trail. Luokkala shared the lower parking lot heading north will be ABA, with a goal to have a 5% grade or below. Bill Lynch questioned what the City is doing for senior citizens in Western Duluth. Luokkala shared the 6th Street, north of Skyline will remain open. Mike Casey (public) questioned if the parking lots to the trail will have a 5% grade or less. Luokkala confirmed. Mike Casey (public) questioned what will be used to barricade the roadway from the park and if bikes will be able to turn left from the pathway.

Action Item: Torch motioned to approve the Lincoln Park Vacation. Second by Joyce. Called the motion to Vote. Unanimously approved.

C. Plan for Protection and Use of Green Space in and Around City of Duluth Golf Courses with Recommendations for Duluth Golf (Action) –Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration

Jim Filby Williams shared the proposal suggests to move 50 acres of Lester Park for high development value in order to meet critical housing needs. Indicated this is not the golf study process, but the comprehensive planning process which was unanimously recommended by the Planning Commission. Stated the recommendation today is 81% less than the previously approved plans. Shared the community's desire to have more affordable housing. Reflected on the next steps of the process and the meaning of the resolution of intent. Shared the City heard that many did not the first plan, and citizens were entirely correct for that matter and we have adjusted. Stated the property was purchased by the City in order to add 9 holes of golf. Demmer stated there is less ecological value. Edmondson questioned the changes to Lester River Road, and if it would be the primary access. Jim Filby Williams indicated these are the importance details that can only be clarified in the next phase of study. Edmondson questioned what the rush is to make a decision. Jim Filby Williams indicated current work with the county to assess current property around the City, making this the appropriate opportunity to discuss the land adjacent to the golf course. Edmondson stated if the plan is new to the Parks Commission, it is new to the community. Jim Filby Williams shared the new proposal is not significantly different from the first proposal. Joyce questioned the amount of deferred maintenance costs. Jim Filby Williams mentioned an estimate for the golf course after an assessment totaled to 100 million dollars.

Public Comment:

Rich Staffon from the Izaak Walton League shared the only place we have is our parks and public lands to refresh our soul. Expressed the concern of any proposal to sell park land. Indicated all of the stakeholders need to be involved in the decision. Questioned if there will be future acres sold at Lester. Questioned what the rush is to decide on selling lands. Stated affordable housing is a separate issue, and should not be treated within the same process.

Nathanial Busek shared the current proposal fails to address what is best for Lester parkland and what the community needs. Indicated the statement is subjective that the land is only good for



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development. Thanked the Parks and Recreation Commission for asking good questions.

Aaron Crowell thanked the Commission for the many hours put into this project. Shared the hope that the City will slow down to make a decision. Referred to the Image Duluth Comprehensive Plan. Stated there are critical steps to review of the potential impacts from future developments. Mentioned more input is needed before making a decision.

Jim Sandness shared the desire to play as much golf as possible. Questioned City Administrations commitment towards Duluth golf. Questioned if there will be future sales to cover capital improvements, mentioned this is unsustainable.

Ryan Jones-Casey representing Keep Lester Green, expressed a concern with the sale of Lester for Enger. Indicated he would like to have a robust public process involved. Requested to have the Parks and Recreation Commission reject the proposal. Stated the land is owned by the people.

Rachel Sharpenburg stated citizens do not feel informed and the process is moving too quickly. Indicated this is moving too quickly. Shared the desire to have the land kept as public. Expressed this process should not be a quick fix.

David Nelson indicated he is a golfer. Expressed concerns with the amount of units to be developed on the property. Shared Duluth golf should be evaluated based off how other recreational activities are analyzed. Shared the conditions of the courses are poor. Questioned why the City cannot receive a subsidy for golf.

Mike Casey shared he has regularly attended the Park and Recreation Commission Meetings. Mentioned the process has changed because Administration listened to the comments made from the first proposal. Shared the appreciation had with Commissioner Isernhagen on staying informed with the golf concerns.

Chris Stevens thanked the Parks and Recreation Commission. Indicated he has stepped down as President for the Friends of Duluth Public Golf. Highlighted the topic of golf is an important concern. Expressed gratitude that the City is providing an opportunity to restore golf. Indicated maintenance concerns are the reality for golf. Thanked the Commission for their time and consideration.

Edmondson indicated he is not comfortable with the proposed plan.

Rohrbaugh requested a description of the 450 acres of land to be acquired.

Jim Filby Williams stated the space is extraordinary, including two cold water trout streams, forests, and wetlands, and it is a wonderland.

Isernhagen motioned to approved the proposed changes to ownership of public greenspace in



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Lester Park and Enger Park areas, encompassing everything included in the proposal. Second by Joyce. Called the motion to Vote. 6-2 for the following

Demmer yea

Edmondson nay

Rohbaugh yea

Joyce yea

Crosby yea

Torch yea

Breeuwer nay

Isernhagen yea

Absent: Bergerson and Peterson.

XIII. Division Report

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Public Comment

Bill Lynch: requested to have more trashcans placed for those throwing away dog waste.

Denette Lynch: Shared Duluth has 17K acres of greenspace and the Parks and Recreation Commission should sleep well with the new proposal. Mentioned if Duluth is to grow that it will require more housing. Shared the disappointment had with how she was informed about the Merritt Community Center. Indicated she would like to know the timeline for the demolition of the building.

Adjournment

XIV. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 at the City Hall Council Chamber.